

SOCIOLOGY in Our Times

11e



Diana Kendall

The image features three interlocking gears of different colors: a green gear at the top, an orange gear on the left, and a red gear on the right. The gears are arranged in a triangular pattern, with the green gear at the top, the orange gear at the bottom left, and the red gear at the bottom right. The text "SOCIOLOGY IN OUR TIMES" is centered over the gears.

SOCIOLOGY IN OUR TIMES



SOCIOLOGY IN OUR TIMES

11E

Diana Kendall
Baylor University



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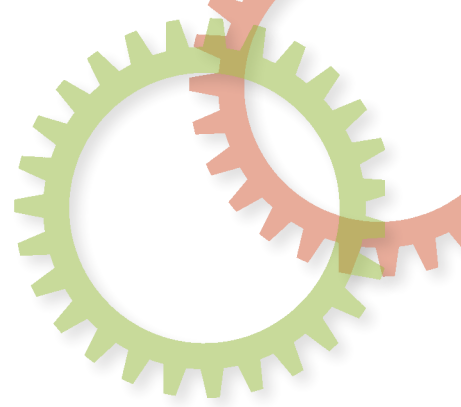
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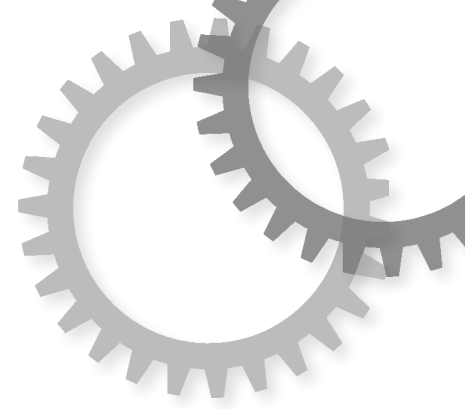
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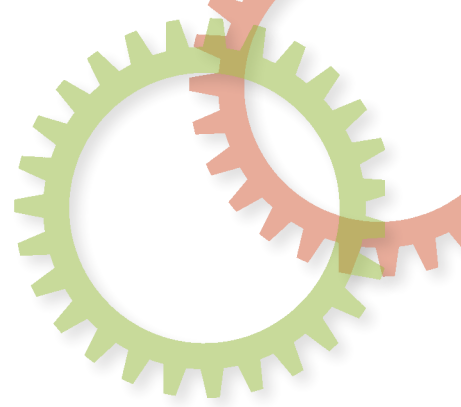
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PREFACE

Hello and welcome to the eleventh edition of *Sociology in Our Times*! I think you will find that this best-selling text lives up to the timeliness in its name. Each edition is thoroughly revised and updated to reflect the newest sociological insights and statistical data. It also looks at contemporary social life and pressing societal problems through a sociological lens. Topics include injustice and inequality, family-related issues, educational and health problems, crime and gun violence, racism and hate crimes, terrorism and war, and environmental degradation.

What would you like to know more about in the social world where you live? As you know, we face unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the twenty-first century. By gaining new sociological insights on pressing social issues, you can enhance your perspective on the world and envision new ways in which you might make a difference for yourself and for future generations. The issues of social injustice and inequality are explored in depth in all chapters because these factors may hamper social change or contribute to it, particularly through collective behavior and social movements in which people demand that change occur. By studying sociology and reading *Sociology in Our Times*, you will gain a better understanding of why people seek stability within social institutions—including family, religion, education, politics, and government—even if they believe that these institutions might benefit from certain changes.

Like previous editions, the eleventh edition of *Sociology in Our Times* highlights the relevance of sociology to enable you to connect with the subject and the full spectrum of topics and issues that it encompasses. It achieves this connection by providing a meaningful, concrete context within which to learn. Specifically, it presents the comments and stories—the *lived experiences*—of real individuals in *Sociology and Everyday Life* features that describe the social issues they face, within the context of discussing classical and contemporary social theory and examining interesting and relevant research. The first-person commentaries and real-life examples that begin each chapter show how sociology can help you and other students understand the important questions we face and how these concerns are embedded within the larger culture and social world in which we live. These opening experiences also provide a framework that helps organize and highlight the chapter material and makes it easier for you to understand the new concepts, theories, and research that are introduced in the chapter.

Why is this text different? *Sociology in Our Times* includes the best of classical and contemporary sociologists, and it weaves an inclusive treatment of all people—across lines of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity and orientation, age, ability/disability, and other important attributes—into the examination of sociology. It does not oversimplify or water down the sociology! While helping you appreciate how sociology provides a better understanding of the world, this text gives you insights on your personal role as a *member of your various groups, organizations, and communities*. As a result, you will see that sociology is more than a collection of concepts and theories: Sociology is an academic area of study that can make a significant difference in your life! I invite you to join me on this exciting journey and to let me know what you think as we move forward.

What's New to the Eleventh Edition?

The eleventh edition builds on the best of previous editions but places more emphasis on social change while offering new cutting-edge insights, helpful learning tools, and fresh opportunities to apply the content of each chapter to relevant sociological issues and major concerns of the twenty-first century. As it is my goal to make each edition better than the previous one, I have revised all chapters to reflect the latest in sociological theory and research, and have updated examples throughout. Additionally, all statistics, such as data relating to crime, demographics, health, and the economy, are the latest available at the time of this writing. In sum, I have done more than simply revise existing materials and features. The page layouts have been refreshed and are very easy to follow: Boxed inserts have been reduced to provide you with a straightforward, more concise text that is highly relevant to your interests and makes studying for exams easier.

One feature of the eleventh edition that you will notice immediately is that learning objectives are restated at relevant locations throughout each chapter to help you with your reading and note taking. All chapter learning objectives are listed at the beginning of each chapter, and then they are listed individually when that specific topic is introduced in the chapter, and finally the Chapter Review provides a brief synopsis of all the learning objectives and key points.

Changes by Chapter

CHAPTER 1, The Sociological Perspective

- Throughout the chapter, more discussion on applied sociology and on how social change affects sociological theory and students' use of what they are learning in the course
- Revised "Sociology & Everyday Life" feature about the sociological aspects of consumer debt and student credit card debt
- New discussion of the American Sociological Association's organizational section on consumers and consumption
- Expanded discussion of consumption and consumerism and why these subjects should be important to students studying sociology
- New research on how people in similar income brackets spend money differently by city and region
- Shorter and more concise section on "The Development of Sociological Thinking"
- Revised discussion of "The Development of Modern Sociology"
- Information from "Sociology Works!" feature moved into discussion of Karl Marx
- Information from "Census Profiles" on consumer spending moved into body of text
- Expanded final section on "Looking Ahead: Are Theory and/or Practice in Your Future?" regarding sociological practice and public sociology

CHAPTER 2, Sociological Research Methods

- New opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" lived experience on bullying, social media abuse, and suicide among young people
- Updated "How Much Do You Know About Suicide?"
- "Sociology Works!" moved into "Sociology in Global Perspective" to relate Durkheim's work to contemporary suicide among young people in India
- Updated "Understanding Statistical Data Presentations" to reflect latest data on homicide, suicide, and firearm-related deaths of youths ages 15–19 by gender
- Revised "Sociology & Social Policy" to provide latest data on suicides among U.S. military personnel and efforts being made to reduce rates
- "Census Profiles" deleted to streamline chapter
- Updated "Statistics: What We Know (and Don't Know)"
- Deleted "Framing Suicide in the Media"
- Deleted dated study in "The Humphreys Research" section on "Ethical Issues in Sociological Research" because it potentially casts aspersions on groups based on sexual identity and orientation
- Revised and expanded "Looking Ahead: Research, Social Change, and Your Future" to discuss how computational social science has transformed research and how methods such as social geospatial modeling (GIS) and social network analysis have brought about rapid change in sociological studies

CHAPTER 3, Culture

- New opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" lived experience on how culture may be spread through food trucks
- Updated map showing "States with Official English Laws"
- Deleted "Census Profiles"
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective" to show how old the cultural norms about drinking behavior are in the Republic of Georgia
- Deleted "Framing Culture in the Media"
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Culture, Social Change, and Your Future" to emphasize ways in which culture is affected by technology and why the study of culture helps students understand their own social world while becoming more aware of how other people live

CHAPTER 4, Socialization

- New opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" lived experience on "Class Attendance in Higher Education" about digital-age methods of reducing skipping classes
- Updated figure on "Types of Maltreatment Among Children Under Age 18"
- Deleted "Sociology Works!" and "Media Framing" to make material more concise for students
- Revised and updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization"
- New discussion of the effects of social isolation and loneliness, particularly among older individuals
- New final section on "Looking Ahead: Socialization, Social Change, and Your Future" discussing digital natives and digital immigrants

CHAPTER 5, Social Structure and Interaction in Everyday Life

- Revised figure on "Causes of Family Homelessness in 25 Cities"
- Deleted "Framing Homelessness in the Media" and incorporated some of the information into the main text
- Revised figure: "Who Are the Homeless?"
- Deleted photo essay
- Deleted "Census Profiles"
- Revised and updated "Sociology & Social Policy: What's Going on in 'Paradise'?—Homeless Rights Versus Public Space"
- Deleted "Sociology Works!"
- Updated "You Can Make a Difference" feature

CHAPTER 6, Groups and Organizations

- Deleted "Framing Community in the Media" and moved some information into the text
- Deleted "Sociology Works!" and moved some of the content into "Sumner's Ingroups and Outgroups"
- Revised and updated "Sociology & Social Policy: Technology and Social Change in the Workplace: BYOD?"
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Social Change and Organizations in the Future"

CHAPTER 7, Deviance and Crime

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience, “When the Unspeakable Happens,” about the final report on the Sandy Hook school killings
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and moved some of the content into discussion about deviance
- Updated discussion and examples throughout sections on crime theories
- Updated crime statistics throughout chapter
- Revised and updated all figures pertaining to crime statistics
- Deleted “Framing Violent Crime in the Media” and moved some content into discussion about violent crime
- Updated discussion about terrorism and crime to include violence in France
- Updated statistics on the criminal justice system
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective: A Wider Perspective on Gangs: Look and Listen Around the World”
- Revised and expanded section on Internet crime

CHAPTER 8, Class and Stratification in the United States

- Updated statistics on income, poverty, health insurance, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout chapter
- Updated models and figures for the U.S. class structure
- Revised figure: “Distribution of Pretax Income in the United States, 2013”
- Revised figure: “Median Household Income in the United States”
- Revised figure: “Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States”
- Revised figure: “Racial Divide in Net Worth, 2013”
- Revised figure: “Rate of Uninsurance by Household Income, 2013”
- Deleted photo essay
- Revised and updated map: “Percentage of People in Poverty in the Past 12 Months by State, 2013”
- Revised and updated figure: “U.S. Poverty Rate by Age, 1959–2013”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Students Helping Others Through Campus Kitchen”

CHAPTER 9, Global Stratification

- Revised and updated information in “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Global Wealth and Poverty?”
- Revised “Classifications of Economies by Income” and map of “High-, Middle-, and Low-Income Economies in Global Perspective”
- Deleted “Framing Child Labor Issues in the Media”
- Revised and updated “Global Poverty and Human Development Issues,” including life expectancy, per capita gross national income, and accompanying figures
- Updated information in “Education and Literacy” section
- Updated discussion of multidimensional poverty index
- Updated information on maquiladora plants

- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and incorporated some information into the main body of the text
- Revised and updated “Looking Ahead: Global Inequality in the Future”

CHAPTER 10, Race and Ethnicity

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience about Selma, Alabama, fifty years after the Civil Rights March
- Revised and updated information in “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Race, Ethnicity, and Sports?”
- Deleted “Census Profiles” and included information within the chapter
- Replaced “Sociology in Global Perspective” box with new “Sociology & Social Policy” box on “Racist Hate Speech on Campus Versus First Amendment Right to Freedom of Speech”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and “Framing Sports in the Media” in order to expand discussion of current racial/ethnic strife in the United States
- Updated all information on “Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States”
- Revised final section: “Looking Ahead: The Future of Global Racial and Ethnic Inequality”

CHAPTER 11, Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on “When Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias Collide”
- New “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz on “How Much Do You Know About Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias?”
- Revised and updated discussion about LGBTQ issues and made extensive changes to “Intersex and Transgender Persons” section
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and “Census Profiles” to provide more space for expanded discussion of sexual identity, sexual orientation, and the U.S. Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage
- Updated section on “Gender and Socialization”
- Deleted “Framing Gender in the Media” and expanded discussion of “Mass Media and Gender Socialization” to include more on social media
- Revised and updated “Contemporary Gender Inequality” section, especially “Gendered Division of Paid Work in the United States”
- Updated table: “Percentage of the Workforce Represented by Women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Selected Occupations”
- Updated figure: “The Wage Gap, 2013”
- Updated figure: “Women’s Wages as a Percentage of Men’s in Each Racial–Ethnic Category”
- Updated map: “Women’s Earnings as a Percentage of Men’s Earnings by State and Puerto Rico, 2013”
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective” box: “Women’s Body Size and the Globalization of ‘Fat Stigma’”

- Updated “You Can Make a Difference” box on the “Love Your Body” campaign
- Deleted photo essay

CHAPTER 12, Aging and Inequality Based on Age

- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” on “Facing Obstacles to Living a Long, Full Life”
- Revised statistics on aging throughout chapter
- Updated discussion of “Age and the Life Course in Contemporary Society”
- Revised map: “Median Age by State, 2013”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy” box on elderly drivers
- Deleted “Framing Aging in the Media”
- Updated figure: “Percentage of Persons Age 65+ Below the Poverty Level”
- Updated figure: “Living Arrangements of the Population Ages 65 and Over, by Sex and Race and Hispanic Origin, 2012”
- Updated discussion of nursing homes

CHAPTER 13, The Economy and Work in Global Perspective

- Updated opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on defining the twenty-first-century workplace and updated “How Much Do You Know About Work in the United States in the 2010s?”
- Deleted “Census Profiles”
- Updated figure: “Top Ten Fastest-Growing Occupations, 2012–2022”
- Updated table: “Revenues of the World’s 20 Largest Public and Private Corporations (2014)”
- Updated table: “The Music Industry’s Big Three”
- Updated figure: “The General Motors Board of Directors”
- Updated discussion of socialism
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective” box on the “Lopsided Job Market in China: A Mismatch Between Workers and Jobs”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated figure: “Selected Highest-Paying Occupations, 2014”
- Updated figure: “SAT Scores by Parents’ Income and Education, 2014”
- Updated statistics in “Unemployment” section
- Deleted “Framing Luxury Consumption in the Media”
- Updated map: “U.S. Unemployment Rates by State, 2015”
- Revised and updated discussion of “Worker Resistance and Activism,” particularly labor union statistics
- Updated figure: “Major Work Stoppages in the United States, 1960–2012”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: The Global Economy and Work in the Future”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy” box on “How Globalization Changes the Nature of Social Policy”

CHAPTER 14, Politics and Government in Global Perspective

- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Politics and the Media?”
- Revised discussion of the 2012 presidential election and midterm elections throughout the chapter
- Revised and updated discussion of super PACs
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” box
- Revised “Voter Participation and Voter Apathy”
- Revised discussion of federal bureaucracy
- Revised figure: “Categories and Percentages of U.S. Federal Spending in Fiscal Year 2015”
- Updated discussion of terrorism and war
- Deleted “Framing Politics in the Media”
- Revised and updated “You Can Make a Difference: Keeping an Eye on the Media”

CHAPTER 15, Families and Intimate Relationships

- Revised chapter opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on “Diverse Family Landscapes in the Twenty-First Century” and updated “How Much Do You Know About Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life?”
- Revised statistics on families throughout chapter
- Deleted “Census Profiles” and added new research to section on “Love and Intimacy”
- Updated data on cohabitation and domestic partnerships
- Added figure: “Estimated Number of Opposite-Sex Couples Cohabiting in the United States in Selected Years, 1996–2014”
- Deleted map: “Percentage of All Households Reporting as Same-Sex Couple Households in 2010 Census”
- Updated statistics on “Marriage,” “Same-Sex Marriages,” and “Housework and Child-Care Responsibilities”
- Updated statistics on “Deciding to Have Children”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated statistics on “Adoption,” “Teenage Childbearing,” and “Single-Parent Households”
- Deleted “Framing Teen Pregnancy in the Media”
- Updated figure: “Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old for Selected Years, 1970–2014”
- Updated figure: “Marital Status of U.S. Population Ages 18 and Over by Race/Ethnicity”
- Updated figure: “U.S. Divorce Rate by State, 1990–2012”
- Updated statistics on divorce and remarriage
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Family Issues in the Future”

CHAPTER 16, Education

- Reworked data throughout chapter to provide latest information on education
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About U.S. Education?”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Deleted “Framing Education in the Media”
- Updated figure: “Percentage Distribution of Total Public Elementary–Secondary School System Revenue, 2014–2015”

- Revised figure: “Status Dropout Rates for 16- to 24-Year-Olds, by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Region”
- Updated discussion of “School Safety and Violence at All Levels” to include the issue of concealed carry of guns on college and university campuses
- Updated discussion of community colleges and tribal colleges
- Updated “The High Cost of a College Education”
- Updated “Slashed Budgets at State Colleges and Universities”
- Updated discussion of racial and ethnic diversity in student and faculty populations
- Deleted “Census Profiles” and moved figure on “Educational Attainment of Persons Ages 25 and Over” into the body of the text
- Revised and updated “Looking Ahead: Future Trends in Education”

CHAPTER 17, Religion

- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and incorporated ideas of Peter Berger into text
- Updated table: “Major World Religions”
- Updated figure: “World Religions by Percentage of Adherents”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy” on the issue of separation of church and state
- Deleted table on “Top 25 U.S. Denominations That Self-Identify as Christian” because newer, comparable data are not available
- Updated figure: “U.S. Religious Traditions’ Membership”
- Deleted “Framing Religion in the Media”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Religion in the Future”

CHAPTER 18, Health, Health Care, and Disability

- Updated discussion and data for illness and health care throughout the chapter.
- Deleted “Framing Health Issues in the Media” and incorporated this material in the text
- Updated statistics on health-related data such as life expectancy, infant mortality, and racial/ethnic and class differences.
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective” on “Medical Crises in the Aftermath of Disasters: From Oklahoma to Nepal” to include earthquake in Nepal
- Updated information on sexually transmitted diseases
- Updated figure: “Chlamydia: Rates by Age and Sex, United States, 2012”
- Updated map: “Adult Obesity in the United States: 2013”
- Updated discussion on implementation and legal issues associated with the Affordable Care Act
- Updated figure: “Increase in Cost of Health Care, 1993–2014”
- Revised discussion of “Private Health Insurance,” “Public Health Insurance,” “Managed Care,” and “The Uninsured”
- Updated figure: “Uninsured Children by Poverty Status, Household Income, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity, 2013”

- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated discussion and data on disability

CHAPTER 19, Population and Urbanization

- Updated figure: “Growth in the World’s Population, 2014”
- Revised demography discussion and included new data for fertility, mortality, and migration
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective” on “Problems People Like to Ignore: Global Diaspora and the Migrant Crisis”
- Updated table: “The Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900 and 2014”
- Updated figure: “Population Pyramids for Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France, 2014”
- Deleted “Framing Immigration in the Media,” “Photo Essay,” and “Sociology Works!” to provide room for more information on population and urbanization
- Updated “Problems in Global Cities”
- Updated figure: “The World’s Fifteen Largest Agglomerations”
- Updated figure: “Increase in the World’s Population in Billions of People”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Population and Urbanization in the Future.”

CHAPTER 20, Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Social Change

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on “Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues”
- Updated discussion of collective behavior, social movements, and social change
- Revised table: “Top 15 Policy Priorities of the U.S. Public, 2015”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” to provide more space to revise and update discussion of environmental issues and social movements
- Added more-contemporary environmental activists and issues, including divestment in fossil-fuel industries by universities and other institutional investors

Overview of the Text’s Contents

Sociology in Our Times, eleventh edition, contains twenty high-interest, up-to-date, clearly organized chapters to introduce students to the best of sociological thinking. The length of the text has been streamlined and carefully organized to make full coverage of the book possible in the time typically allocated to the introductory course.

Sociology in Our Times is divided into five parts. **Part 1** establishes the foundation for studying society and social life. **Part 2** examines social groups and social control. **Part 3** focuses on social inequality, looking at issues of class, race/ethnicity, sex/gender/sexuality, and age discrimination. **Part 4** offers a systematic discussion of social institutions, building students’ awareness of the importance of these foundational elements of society and showing how a

problem in one often has a significant influence on others. **Part 5** surveys social dynamics and social change.

Part 1

Chapter 1 introduces students to the sociological imagination and traces the development of sociological thinking. The chapter sets forth the major theoretical perspectives used by sociologists in analyzing compelling social issues, such as the problem of credit card abuse and hyperconsumerism among college students and others.

Chapter 2 focuses on sociological research methods and shows students how sociologists conduct research. This chapter provides a thorough description of both quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research. Throughout the chapter, new updates concentrate on various factors that influence suicide rates.

In **Chapter 3**, culture is spotlighted as either a stabilizing force or a force that can generate discord, conflict, and even violence in societies. Cultural diversity is discussed as a contemporary issue, and unique coverage is given to popular culture and leisure and to divergent perspectives on popular culture.

Chapter 4 looks at the positive and negative aspects of socialization, including opening lived experiences about learning socialization cues in college and medical school. This chapter presents an innovative analysis of gender and racial–ethnic socialization and of issues associated with recent immigration.

Part 2

Chapter 5 applies the sociological imagination to an examination of social structure and social interaction, using homelessness as a sustained example of the dynamic interplay of structure and interaction in society. Unique to this chapter are discussions of the sociology of emotions and of personal space as viewed through the lenses of race, class, gender, and age.

Chapter 6 analyzes groups and organizations, including innovative forms of social organization and ways in which organizational structures may differentially affect people based on race, class, gender, and age. The opening narrative discusses an MIT professor’s experience with students using digital technology in the classroom.

Chapter 7 examines how deviance and crime emerge in societies, using diverse theoretical approaches to describe the nature of deviance, crime, and the criminal justice system. Key issues are dramatized for students through an analysis of recent mass shootings and the consequences of violence on individuals and society.

Part 3

Chapter 8 focuses on class and stratification in the United States, analyzing the causes and consequences of inequality and poverty, including a discussion of the ideology and accessibility of the American Dream.

Chapter 9 addresses the issue of global stratification and examines differences in wealth and poverty in rich and poor nations around the world. Explanations for these differences are discussed.

The focus of **Chapter 10** is race and ethnicity, which includes an illustration of the historical relationship (or lack of it) between sports and upward mobility by persons from diverse racial–ethnic groups. A thorough analysis of prejudice, discrimination, theoretical perspectives, and the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups is presented, along with global racial and ethnic issues.

Chapter 11 examines sex, gender, and sexuality, with special emphasis on gender stratification in historical perspective. Linkages between gender socialization and contemporary gender inequality are described and illustrated by lived experiences and perspectives on body image.

Chapter 12 provides a cutting-edge analysis of aging, including theoretical perspectives and inequalities experienced by people across the life course. This chapter has thorough discussions of adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood.

Part 4

The economy and work are explored in **Chapter 13**, including the different types of global economic systems, the social organization of work in the United States, unemployment, and unions. The chapter has been extensively revised to include issues pertaining to the aftermath of the “Great Recession,” including job loss, higher rates of unemployment, and the gradual economic recovery during the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Chapter 14 discusses the intertwining nature of politics, government, and the media. Political systems are examined in global perspective, and politics and government in the United States are analyzed with attention to governmental bureaucracy and the military–industrial complex.

Chapter 15 focuses on families in global perspective and on the diversity found in U.S. and global families today. The latest figures on family-related issues such as family violence, foster care, and teenage pregnancy are included.

Chapter 16 investigates education in the United States and other nations. In the process the chapter highlights issues of race, class, and gender inequalities in current U.S. education.

In **Chapter 17**, religion is examined from a global perspective, including a survey of world religions and an analysis of how religious beliefs affect other aspects of social life. Current trends in U.S. religion are also explored, including various sociological explanations of why people look to religion to find purpose and meaning in life.

Chapter 18 analyzes health, health care, and disability from both U.S. and global perspectives. Among the topics included are social epidemiology, lifestyle factors influencing health and illness, health care organization in the United States and other nations, social implications of advanced medical technology, and holistic and alternative medicine. This chapter is unique in that it contains a

thorough discussion of the sociological perspectives on disability and of social inequalities based on disability. The Affordable Care Act is explored in detail.

Part 5

Chapter 19 examines population and urbanization, looking at demography, global population change, and the process and consequences of urbanization. Special attention is given to race- and class-based segregation in urban areas and the crisis in health care in central cities.

Chapter 20 concludes the text with an innovative analysis of collective behavior, social movements, and social change. The need for persistence in social movements, such as the continuing work of environmental activists over the past fifty years, is used as an example to help students grasp the importance of collective behavior and social movements in producing social change.

Distinctive, Classroom-Tested Features

The following special features are specifically designed to demonstrate the relevance of sociology in our lives, as well as to support students' learning. As the preceding overview of the book's contents shows, these features appear throughout the text, some in every chapter, others in selected chapters.

Unparalleled Coverage of and Attention to Diversity

From its first edition, I have striven to integrate diversity in numerous ways throughout this book. The individuals portrayed and discussed in each chapter accurately mirror the diversity in society itself. As a result, this text speaks to a wide variety of students and captures their interest by taking into account their concerns and perspectives. Moreover, the research used includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists—including many women and people of color—and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. Therefore, this text helps students consider the significance of the intersectionality of class, race, gender, and age in all aspects of social life.

Personal Narratives That Highlight Key Issues

Authentic first-person commentaries serve as the vignettes that open each chapter and personalize the issue that unifies the chapter's coverage. These lived experiences provide opportunities for students to examine social life beyond their own experiences and for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and discussions an array of interesting and relevant topics that help demonstrate to students the value of applying sociology to their everyday lives. New topics include "Class Attendance in Higher Education," "When Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias Collide," and "Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues."

Focus on the Relationship Between Sociology and Everyday Life

Each chapter has a brief quiz in the opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" feature that relates the sociological perspective to the pressing social issues presented in the opening vignette. (Answers are provided at the end of the chapter.)

Emphasis on the Importance of a Global Perspective

The global implications of all topics are examined throughout each chapter and in the "Sociology in Global Perspective" boxes, which highlight our interconnected world and reveal how the sociological imagination extends beyond national borders.

Emphasis on Social and Global Change

The eleventh edition also strives to relate the importance of social and global change in its many forms and how this affects not only our everyday lives but also our communities and the entire nation and world.

Applying the Sociological Imagination to Social Policy

The "Sociology & Social Policy" boxes in selected chapters help students understand the connection between law and social policy issues in society.

Focus on Making a Difference

Designed to help students learn how to become involved in their communities, the "You Can Make a Difference" boxes look at ways in which students can address, on a personal level, issues raised by the chapter themes.

Effective Study Aids

In addition to basic reading and study aids such as learning objectives, chapter outlines, key terms, a running glossary, and our popular online study system, *Sociology in Our Times* includes the following pedagogical aids to enhance students' mastery of course content:

- **Concept Quick Review.** These tables categorize and contrast the major theories or perspectives on the specific topics presented in a chapter.
- **Questions for Critical Thinking.** Each chapter concludes with "Questions for Critical Thinking" to encourage students to reflect on important issues, to develop their own critical-thinking skills, and to highlight how ideas presented in one chapter often build on those developed previously.
- **Feature-Concluding Reflect & Analyze Questions.** From activating prior knowledge related to concepts and themes, to highlighting main ideas and reinforcing

diverse perspectives, this text's questions consistently contribute to student engagement.

- **End-of-Chapter Summaries.** Connected to the learning objectives, chapter summaries provide a built-in review for students by reexamining material covered in the chapter in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format to review, highlight, and reinforce the most important concepts and issues discussed in each chapter. Each element in the chapter summaries is related to one of the learning objectives introduced at the beginning of the chapter.

Comprehensive Supplements Package

The eleventh edition of *Sociology in Our Times* is accompanied by a wide array of supplements developed to create the best teaching and learning experience inside as well as outside the classroom. All of the continuing supplements have been thoroughly revised and updated, and some new supplements have been added. Cengage Learning prepared the following descriptions, and I invite you to start taking full advantage of the teaching and learning tools available to you by reading this overview.

Products for Blended and Online Courses

MindTap™: The Personal Learning Experience

MindTap Sociology for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student's learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a "Learning Path" that guides the student through the introduction to sociology course. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools to their students, even seamlessly introducing their own content into the Learning Path via apps that integrate into the MindTap platform. Learn more at www.cengage.com/mindtap.

MindTap for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, is easy to use and saves instructors time by allowing them to

- Seamlessly deliver appropriate content and technology assets from a number of providers to students, as needed.
- Break course content down into movable objects to promote personalization, encourage interactivity, and ensure student engagement.
- Customize the course—from tools to text—and make adjustments "on the fly," making it possible to intertwine breaking news into their lessons and incorporate today's teachable moments.
- Bring interactivity into learning through the integration of multimedia assets (apps from Cengage Learning and other providers) and numerous in-context exercises and supplements; student engagement will increase, leading to better student outcomes.

- Track students' use, activities, and comprehension in real time, which provides opportunities for early intervention to influence progress and outcomes. Grades are visible and archived so students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class.
- Assess knowledge throughout each section: after readings and in activities, homework, and quizzes.
- Automatically grade all homework and quizzes.

MindTap Sociology for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, features Aplia assignments, which help students learn to use their sociological imagination through compelling content and thought-provoking questions. Students complete interactive activities that encourage them to think critically in order to practice and apply course concepts. These valuable critical-thinking skills help students become thoughtful and engaged members of society. Aplia for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, is also available as a stand-alone product. Log in to CengageBrain.com for access.

CourseReader for Sociology CourseReader for Sociology allows you to create a fully customized online reader in minutes. You can access a rich collection of thousands of primary and secondary sources, readings, and audio and video selections from multiple disciplines. Each selection includes a descriptive introduction that puts it into context, and every selection is further supported by both critical-thinking and multiple-choice questions designed to reinforce key points. This easy-to-use solution allows you to select exactly the content you need for your courses, and it is loaded with convenient pedagogical features, such as highlighting, printing, note taking, and downloadable MP3 audio files for each reading. You have the freedom to assign and customize individualized content at an affordable price. CourseReader is the perfect complement to any class.

Resources for Customizing Your Textbook

Cengage Learning is pleased to offer three modules that help you tailor *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, to your course. The modules present topics not typically covered in most introductory texts but often requested by instructors. In addition, you can choose to add your own materials or reorganize the table of contents. Work with your local Cengage Learning consultant to find out more.

Careers in Sociology Module Written by leading author Joan Ferrante, Northern Kentucky University, the Careers in Sociology module offers the most extensive and useful information on careers that is available. This module provides six career tracks, each of which has a "featured employer," a job description, and a letter of recommendation (written by a professor for a sociology student) or application (written by a sociology student). The module also includes résumé-building tips on how to make the most out of being a sociology major and offers specific course suggestions along with the transferable skills gained by taking

these courses. As part of Cengage Learning's Add-a-Module Program, Careers in Sociology can be purchased separately, bundled, or customized with any of our introductory texts.

Sociology of Sports Module The Sociology of Sports module, authored by Jerry M. Lewis, Kent State University, examines why sociologists are interested in sports, mass media and sports, popular culture and sports (including feature-length films on sports), sports and religion, drugs and sports, and violence and sports. As part of Cengage Learning's Add-a-Module Program, Sociology of Sports can be purchased separately, bundled, or customized with any of our introductory texts.

Rural Sociology Module The Rural Sociology module, authored by Carol A. Jenkins, Glendale Community College–Arizona, presents the realities of life in rural America. Many people imagine a rural America characterized by farming, similar cultures, and close-knit communities. However, rural Americans and rural communities are extremely diverse—demographically, culturally, socially, economically, and environmentally. The module presents these characteristics of rural life in a comprehensive and accessible format for introductory sociology students. As part of Cengage Learning's Add-a-Module program, Rural Sociology can be purchased separately, bundled, or customized with any of our introductory sociology texts.

Teaching Aids for Instructors

A broad array of teaching aids is available to make course planning faster and easier, giving you more time to focus on your students. All of these resources can be accessed with a single account. Go to login.cengage.com to log in.

Online Instructor's Resource Center

Online Instructor's Resource Manual Prepared by Josh Packard of the University of Northern Colorado, this text is designed to maximize the effectiveness of your course preparation. It offers you Quick Start questions to launch your lecture, brief chapter outlines, key terms, and student learning objectives, plus extensive chapter lecture outlines mapped to the learning objectives, lecture ideas, questions for discussion, Internet activities, student activities, and creative lecture and teaching suggestions, including video suggestions.

Online Test Bank Prepared by Josh Packard of the University of Northern Colorado, the eleventh edition's test bank consists of revised and updated true/false and multiple-choice questions for every chapter of the text, along with an answer key and page references for each question. Each multiple-choice item has the question type (fact, concept, or application) indicated. Also included are short-answer and essay questions for every chapter.

Online PowerPoint® Slides Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your

visually oriented students, these handy Microsoft® PowerPoint slides outline the chapters of the main text in a classroom-ready presentation that include tables, selected figures, a Quick Quiz, and now more photos as “Consider This” slides. The PowerPoint slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text.

The Sociology Video Library Vols. I–IV These DVDs drive home the relevance of course topics through short, provocative clips of current and historical events. Perfect for enriching lectures and engaging students in discussion, many of the segments on this volume have been gathered from BBC Motion Gallery. Ask your Cengage Learning representative for a list of contents.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero

This is a flexible, online system that allows you to

- import, edit, and manipulate test bank content from the *Sociology in Our Times* test bank or elsewhere, including your own favorite test questions
- create multiple test versions in an instant
- deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want

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I invite you to send your comments and suggestions about this book to me in care of:

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SOCIOLOGY IN OUR TIMES

THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE





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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 **Define** sociology and explain how it can contribute to our understanding of social life.
- 2 **Identify** what is meant by the sociological imagination.
- 3 **Describe** how we can develop a global sociological imagination.
- 4 **Describe** the historical context in which sociological thinking developed.
- 5 **Discuss** why early social thinkers were concerned with social order and stability.
- 6 **Identify** reasons why many later social thinkers were concerned with social change.
- 7 **Discuss** how industrialization and urbanization influenced the theories of Max Weber and Georg Simmel.
- 8 **Compare** and contrast contemporary functionalist and conflict perspectives on social life.
- 9 **Identify** key differences in contemporary symbolic interactionism and postmodernist perspectives on social life.



College Life and the Consumer Society

What I enjoyed about college was that I was able to walk away with a degree and go find a job, but what I regret most is getting a credit card, racking it up and getting multiple credit cards and doing the same thing, 'cause now I have to deal with it and I'm paying it off now and it's kind of hard to deal with. Things that I charged on my credit card in college were those spring break vacations, going out to eat with friends numerous times. Other things were like materialistic things like clothes, accessories, makeup—all that good stuff—trying to keep up with everyone else. [Slight laugh.] I wish I could do those things now. Now, I can't have those things; I have to do with what I've got. . . . I can't enjoy the things I enjoyed in college because I enjoyed them in college. I guess when I was making the purchases in college with my credit card saying, "Oh, I can just pay that off later," I figured I would be making more money than what I was given through financial aid and through my parents, [but] in reality, you're not. You have to

Young people who run up credit card debt may find that paying off the debt can take decades.

compensate for other things like tax being taken out of your salary, groceries, gas is something I didn't even think about because my parents always paid it. I mean, all those little things: They will add up!

—ROBYN BECK (2014) describing her experience of struggling to pay off \$7,000 in credit card debt that she ran up during her college years



Like millions of college students in the United States and other high-income nations, Robyn Beck quickly learned both the liberating and constraining aspects of living in a “consumer society” where many of us rely on our credit cards to pay for the goods or services that we want or need. For many years companies targeted college students, trying to get you to apply for a credit card regardless of whether you had the financial ability to pay off your balance. Since 2009, the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure (CARD) Act has banned credit card approval for anyone under age twenty-one unless the person can prove that he or she has sufficient income to pay their bill or unless someone over age twenty-one agrees to cosign the application. However, this has not ended the problems related to students' credit card debt. Are you aware, for example, that most college students who own a credit card have an unpaid balance of at least \$500 on that card? The companies that issue credit cards are concerned because students have little, if any, credit card history and have the potential to be less “creditworthy.” As a result, these companies frequently charge the highest annual interest rates for student-issued cards. These rates were at about 21.4 percent in 2014. Think about this: If you charge \$1,000 on a credit card with a 21.4 percent interest rate and pay the minimum amount due each month, eventually you will pay \$1,941 for the \$1,000 you initially borrowed. If you add no additional

charges beyond the initial \$1,000 and pay only the minimum amount due each month, you will need 7.6 years to pay off the debt (Lowry, 2014). Not only on college campuses but also across nations and the entire world, consumerism is an important aspect of social life in the twenty-first century.

As sociologists in training, why should you be interested in studying consumerism? According to the American Sociological Association's “Section on Consumers and Consumption” (2014), sociologists who specialize in this area do research to show “the pervasiveness of consumer goods and consumerism in shaping our everyday lives, the social structure, and the contemporary social, political, economic, and environmental problems that we face as a global society.” From this explanation, you can see that what we buy is much more than just acquiring goods or services; it also strongly influences how we live our everyday lives and how social change occurs locally and globally. Consumer goods and consumerism are deeply intertwined with the social structure of our nation and the larger global society, including significant global issues such as environmental problems, widening gaps in wealth and other resources, and greater inequalities based on gender, race/ethnicity, and class hierarchies (ASA Section on Consumers and Consumption, 2014).

When you study the *consumer society*—a society in which discretionary consumption is a mass phenomenon among people across diverse income categories—you will

How Much Do You Know About Consumption and Credit Cards?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 The average U.S. household owes more than \$15,000 in credit card debt.
T	F	2 It has become easier in the 2010s for undergraduate college students to get a credit card in their own name.
T	F	3 Among college students who have their own credit card, the average unpaid balance is slightly less than \$500.
T	F	4 Millennials (people ages 18–34) spend more money online in a given year than people in any other age category.
T	F	5 Credit cards are not a financial safety net for low-income families because people with low and middle incomes have greater difficulty acquiring credit.
T	F	6 Fewer individuals filed for bankruptcy in the 2010s because more people are better off financially today than in the past.
T	F	7 The total U.S. outstanding revolving debt on credit cards alone is over \$800 billion.
T	F	8 Overspending is primarily a problem for people in higher-income brackets in the United States and other affluent nations.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

gain important insights into all aspects of social life and social change. However, we must distinguish between *consumption* and *consumerism* for a clearer sociological understanding. When we study *consumption*, we are looking at *behavior* that people around the world routinely engage in—the selection, purchase, and use of products and services that are available in a society. By contrast, *consumerism* refers to social and economic *beliefs* and *structures* that encourage people to acquire goods and services in an ever-increasing manner. Consumerism refers to the characteristics of a larger society and an ideology that frames people’s world-views, values, relationships, identities, and behaviors.

From a sociological perspective, we want to know more about the influences, experiences, and social relationships that produce specific patterns of consumption. When we examine consumption from a larger structural perspective, we see that it is linked to nationality, region, race/ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, age, ability/disability, and other social attributes and characteristics. Learning to study how people think, live, work and play is at the core of all sociological inquiry. This investigation is closely linked to social change and a better understanding of how social differences and inequalities originate, persist, and sometimes change over time and place. For example, recent studies have found that higher-income people in the United States spend money on different things. Even among those with similar wealth,

consumer patterns vary by region and by city. In Manhattan affluent people spend more money on luxury watches and shoes than in cities such as Boston, where people with similar economic resources are more likely to spend their money on private-school tuition and elite college education (Currid-Halkett, 2014). To explain this, some social analysts have said, “Geography is consumer destiny,” meaning that where individuals live affects how they will spend money.

How can we analyze spending patterns by city and region to learn what people value? What can we learn about how people attempt to secure or enhance their social position through what they buy? (Currid-Halkett, 2014). Think about your own city: How do the spending patterns compare for high-, middle-, and low-income persons in relation to clothing, entertainment, and transportation? Do spending patterns reflect economic and social conditions in your community?

Although excessive consumerism may contribute to the individual’s personal financial problems, larger economic conditions are linked to national and global instability. In this chapter you will see how the sociological perspective helps us examine complex questions such as this, as well as learning how sociologists look at difficulties associated with studying human behavior generally. Before reading on, take the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz, which examines a number of commonsense notions about consumption and credit card debt.

LO1

Define sociology and explain how it can contribute to our understanding of social life.

Putting Social Life into Perspective

Sociology is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. It is a *systematic* study because sociologists apply both theoretical perspectives and research methods (or orderly approaches) to examinations of social behavior. Sociologists study human societies and their social interactions to develop theories of how human behavior is shaped by group life and how, in turn, group life is affected by individuals.

To better understand the scope of sociology, you can compare it to other social sciences, such as anthropology, psychology, economics, and political science. Like anthropology, sociology studies many aspects of human behavior; however, sociology is particularly interested in contemporary social organization, relations, and social change. Anthropology primarily concentrates on the study of humankind in all times and spaces. It focuses on both traditional and contemporary societies and the development of diverse cultures. Closest to sociology is cultural anthropology—the comparative study of cultural similarities and differences that looks for patterns in human behavior, beliefs, and practices that are typical in groups of people. By contrast, psychology primarily focuses on *internal* factors relating to the individual in its explanations of human behavior and mental processes, such as how the human mind thinks, remembers, and learns. Social psychology is most akin to sociology because social psychologists examine how we perceive ourselves in relation to the rest of the world and how this affects our choices, behavior, and beliefs. Sociology specifically focuses on *external* social factors, such as the effects of groups, organizations, and social institutions on individuals and social life. Although sociology examines all major social institutions, including the economy and politics, the fields of economics and political science concentrate primarily on a single institution—the economy or the political

system. Topics of mutual interest to economics and sociology include issues such as consumerism and debt, which can be analyzed at global, national, and individual levels. As you can see from these examples, sociology shares similarities with other social sciences but offers a distinct approach for gaining greater understanding of our social world.

Why Should You Study Sociology?

Sociology helps you gain a better understanding of yourself and the social world. It enables you to see how the groups to which you belong and the society in which you live largely shape behavior. A **society** is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations, such as the United States, Mexico, or Nigeria. Many changes are occurring in the twenty-first century. Many societies have not only dominant cultural groupings and expectations but also many smaller groupings that have their own unique cultural identities. Migration and interdependence have shifted the meaning of society in the twenty-first century.

Examining the world order helps us understand that we are all affected by *global interdependence*—a relationship in which the lives of all people everywhere are intertwined closely and any one nation’s problems are part of a larger global problem. Environmental problems are an example. People throughout the world share the same biosphere. When environmental degradation, such as removing natural resources or polluting the air and water, takes place in one region, it may have an adverse effect on people around the globe.

You can make use of sociology on a more personal level. Sociology enables us to move beyond established ways of thinking, thus allowing us to gain new insights into ourselves and to develop a greater awareness of the connection between our own “world” and that of other people. Sociology provides new ways of approaching problems and making decisions in everyday life. For this reason, people with knowledge of sociology are employed in a variety of fields that apply sociological insights to everyday life (see • Figure 1.1).

Health and Human Services	Business	Communication	Academia	Law
Medicine Nursing Physical Therapy Occupational Therapy Counseling Education Social Work	Advertising Labor Relations Management Marketing	Broadcasting Public Relations Journalism Social Media	Anthropology Economics Geography History Information Studies Media Studies/ Communication Political Science Psychology Sociology	Law Criminal Justice Mediation Conflict Resolution

FIGURE 1.1 Fields That Use Social Science Research

In many careers, including jobs in health and human services, business, communication, academia, and law, the ability to analyze social science research is an important asset.

Source: Based on Katzer, Cook, and Crouch, 1991.

Sociology promotes understanding and tolerance by enabling each of us to look beyond intuition, common sense, and our personal experiences. Many of us rely on intuition or common sense gained from personal experience to help us understand our daily lives and other people's behavior. *Commonsense knowledge* guides ordinary conduct in everyday life. However, many commonsense notions are actually myths. A *myth* is a popular but false notion that may be used, either intentionally or unintentionally, to perpetuate certain beliefs or "theories" even in the light of conclusive evidence to the contrary.

By contrast, sociologists strive to use scientific standards, not popular myths or hearsay, in studying society and social interaction. They use systematic research techniques and are accountable to the scientific community for their methods and the presentation of their findings. Whereas some sociologists argue that sociology must be completely value free—free from distorting subjective (personal or emotional) bias—others do not think that total objectivity is an attainable or desirable goal when studying human behavior. However, all sociologists attempt to discover patterns or commonalities in human behavior. When they study consumerism, such as regional spending habits or credit card abuse, for example, they look for recurring patterns of behavior in individuals and groups. Consequently, we seek the multiple causes and effects of social issues and analyze the impact of the problem not only from the standpoint of the people directly involved but also from the standpoint of the effects of such behavior on all people.

LO2 Identify what is meant by the sociological imagination.

The Sociological Imagination

Do you wonder how your daily life compares to what other people are doing? Our interest in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media sites reflects how fascinated we are by what other people are thinking and doing. But how can you really link your personal life with what is going on with other people in the larger social world? You can make an important linkage known as the sociological imagination.

Sociological reasoning is often referred to as the *sociological imagination*—the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society (Mills, 1959b). The sociological imagination is important to each of us because having this awareness enables us to understand the link between our personal experiences and the social contexts in which they occur. Each of us lives in a society, and we live out a biography within some historical setting. Throughout your life, you contribute to the shaping of society and to its history, even as you are made by society and the historical events that take place during your lifetime. The sociological imagination will enable you to grasp the relationship between history at the societal level

and your own biography at the individual level. It also helps you distinguish between personal troubles and social (or public) issues. *Personal troubles* are private problems that affect individuals and the networks of people with whom they associate regularly. As a result, individuals within their immediate social settings must solve those problems. For example, one person being unemployed or having a high level of credit card debt may be a personal trouble. *Public issues* are problems that affect large numbers of people and often require solutions at the societal level (Mills, 1959b). Widespread unemployment and extensive consumer debt are public issues. The sociological imagination helps us place seemingly personal troubles into a larger social context, where we can distinguish whether and how personal troubles may be related to public issues. Let's compare the two perspectives by looking at overspending.

Overspending as a Personal Trouble Have you heard someone say, "He has no one to blame but himself" for some problem? In everyday life we often blame people for "creating" their own problems. Although individual behavior can contribute to social problems, our individual experiences are often largely beyond our own control. They are determined by society as a whole—by its historical development and its organization. If a person sinks into debt because of overspending or credit card abuse, other people often consider the problem to be the result of the individual's personal failings. However, thinking about it this way overlooks debt among people in low-income brackets who have no other way than debt to acquire basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and housing. By contrast, at middle- and upper-income levels, overspending takes on a variety of meanings typically dictated by what people think of as essential for their well-being and associated with the so-called "good life" that is so heavily marketed and flaunted by high-end consumers. But across income and wealth levels, larger-scale economic, political, and social problems may affect the person's ability to pay for consumer goods and services (• Figure 1.2).

Overspending as a Public Issue Let's apply the sociological imagination to the problem of overspending and credit card debt by looking at it first as a public issue—a societal problem. In 2014 consumer debt in the United States added up to more than \$3.24 trillion for student loans, car loans, and revolving debt (amounts that are not paid off in full each month) on credit cards. Debt on credit card balances alone was more than \$880.5 billion (Currid-Halkett, 2014).

sociology

the systematic study of human society and social interaction.

society

a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

sociological imagination

C. Wright Mills's term for the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.



atrendo images/Getty Images

FIGURE 1.2 Because of an overreliance on credit, many Americans now owe more than they can pay back. This couple is signing up for debt consolidation, a somewhat controversial process that may help them avoid bankruptcy.

Sociologically speaking, why do you think this is considered to be a public issue? Consumerism is a way of life in the United States and most nations around the world. Through media and popular culture, people are continually encouraged to buy goods and services that they do not necessarily need. They are bombarded with more and more choices, and many items they own, such as smartphones and tablets, are declared outdated and obsolete not long after they purchase them. A shiny new device is available for them to purchase, and the rapid cycle of buy-and-replace continues into the future. Marketing and advertising encourages people to “buy now and pay later.” The credit card industry stands ready to help people buy what they want and sometime more than they can pay off. Card users are encouraged by credit card companies to carry large balances on their cards, pay high interest rates month after month, and transfer balances to newly issued cards. Spending and overspending are encouraged by the values of society. Similarly, government policies and laws may favor credit card issuers over individual credit card holders when it comes to rights pertaining to debt collection and the handling of lawsuits.

The sociological imagination is useful for examining such issues because it integrates microlevel (individual and small-group) troubles with macrolevel (larger social institutions and social forces) issues on a global basis.

LO3 Describe how we can develop a global sociological imagination.

The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination

How is it possible to think globally when you live in one location and have been taught to think a certain way? Although we live in one country and rely heavily on Western sociological theory and research, we can access the world beyond the United States and learn to develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future. One way we can do this is to reach beyond studies that have focused primarily on the United States to look at the important challenges that we face in a rapidly changing world. These issues range from political and economic instability to environmental concerns, natural disasters, and terrorism. We can also examine the ways in which nations are not on equal footing when it comes to economics and politics (see • Figure 1.3).

The world’s **high-income countries** are nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income. Examples include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the countries of Western Europe.

As compared with other nations of the world, many high-income nations have a high standard of living and a lower death rate because of advances in nutrition and medical technology. However, everyone living in a so-called high-income country does not necessarily have these advantages.

In contrast, **middle-income countries** are nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income. Examples of middle-income countries include the nations of Eastern Europe and many Latin American countries.

Low-income countries are primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income. Examples of low-income countries include many of the nations of Africa and Asia, particularly the People’s Republic of China and India, where people typically work the land and are among the poorest in the world. However, generalizations are difficult to make because there are wide differences in income and standards of living within many nations (see Chapter 9, “Global Stratification”).

Throughout this text we will continue to develop our sociological imaginations by examining social life in the United States and other nations. The future of our nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all other nations of the world on economic, political, environmental, and humanitarian levels.



High income: New York, United States

Low income: Congo

Middle income: China



FIGURE 1.3 The World's Economies in the Twenty-First Century
High-income, middle-income, and low-income countries.

Photos: © Cengage Learning. Photos, left to right: John Berry/Syracuse Newspapers/The Image Works; Gable/Alamy; philipbigg/Alamy.

Whatever your race/ethnicity, class, sex, or age, are you able to include in your thinking the perspectives of people who are quite different from you in experiences and points of view? Before you answer this question, a few definitions are in order. *Race* is a term used by many people to specify groups of people distinguished by physical characteristics such as skin color. *Ethnicity* refers to the cultural heritage or identity of a group and is based on factors such as language or country of origin. *Class* is the relative location of a person or group within the larger society, based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued resources. *Sex* refers to the biological and anatomical differences between females and males. By contrast, *gender* refers to the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with sex differences, referred to as *femininity* and *masculinity*. Although these terms sound very precise, they often do not have a precise meaning and are, instead, social constructions that people use to justify social inequalities. When we refer to something as a “social construction,” we mean that race, ethnicity, class, and gender do not really indicate anything apart from the social meaning that people in a given society confer on them. However, the result is that we may—either intentionally or unintentionally—privilege some categories of people over others who are placed in disadvantaged or subordinate positions. In sum, a “social construction of reality” occurs when large

numbers of people act and respond as if these categories exist in reality instead of being socially created.

LO4 Describe the historical context in which sociological thinking developed.

The Development of Sociological Thinking

Throughout history, social philosophers and religious authorities have made countless observations about human behavior. However, the idea of observing how people lived, finding out what they thought, and doing so in a systematic

high-income countries

(sometimes referred to as **industrial countries**) nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

middle-income countries

(sometimes referred to as **developing countries**) nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.

low-income countries

(sometimes referred to as **underdeveloped countries**) primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.